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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the experiences of two cohorts of teachers who participated in a series of inservice workshops designed to provide instruction and support for novice teachers. A case study approach is used to describe their changed perceptions and beliefs about teachers, teaching, and students during the first year of teaching. The teachers' views were examined in December of their first year and again in the following May. Their views are analyzed in terms of the roles of the teacher as carer for and nurturer of children, manager and controller, collaborator and learner, and in terms of the time-consuming nature of teaching and the teachers' sense of self. Data reveal that first-year teachers were imbued with feelings of self-doubt, insecurity, and aloneness. The most important factor that contributed to their growth as teachers was their development of a strong sense of self. The paper concludes that novice teachers' focus on sense of self is a necessary part of learning to become a teacher, and their sense of self and their sense of their students evolved simultaneously. Implications for mentorship programs and teacher education programs are discussed. (Contains 37 references.) (JDD)

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Waiting for Thursday: New Teachers Discover Teaching

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WAITING FOR THURSDAY: NEW TEACHERS DISCOVER TEACHING

September, a teacher's calling card, ushers in the new school year, one that almost always begins with new hopes, new challenges, and new faces. For teachers, September is the month of endless possibilities. For beginning teachers, thoughts of September are exciting yet often overwhelming. New teachers enter the profession imbued with the mission that they can make a small difference in society or a major difference in the lives of children. Yet by the time October rolls around, preconceived notions and ideas about teaching are not what they seem to be in the reality and context of the classroom. Ideal visions of teaching can easily turn into nightmares. Many new teachers, though armed with successful teacher education backgrounds and the best of intentions do not survive their first year of teaching.

Literature identifies the needs and concerns of first year teachers, but it does not and cannot identify the uniqueness of the individual's experience and the ways in which the uniqueness has to be taken into account. Although mentorship and induction programs have been implemented to support novices, gaps in the literature suggest that the individual goals and needs of these newcomers are still neglected.

This paper focuses on the experiences of two cohorts of teachers who participated in a series of inservice workshops

designed to provide instruction and support for novice teachers. A case study approach is used to describe their own changed perceptions and beliefs about teachers, teaching, and students during the first year of teaching. It examines the professional growth and development they experienced both as a group and as individuals throughout the duration of the program and relates these flindings to the literature in the field. Outcomes are examined and implications for teacher education and teacher induction programs are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher Biography

Theories of cognitive psychology have shown us the significant relationship between one's biography and the development of one's ideals. Individuals are influenced by their their personal histories and formulate their ideals according to these experiences. Recent research has shown us this is especially true in the field of teaching and teacher education (Britzman, 1986; Schubert, 1990; Bullough, 1989, 1990; Kagan, 1992).

Although many factors contribute to the selection of teaching as a career, biography is often a strong factor. A happy and successful school experience as a child creates a natural context for wanting to teach. A positive role model has been established and so has the desire to give this positive experience back to others. An unhappy and unsuccessful school experience can ironically have the same effect. The wounded and bruised student formulates the vision

of the positive role model he or she never had and vows to become an excellent teacher, protecting and saving others like themselves.

Another factor, however, contributes not only to one's becoming a teacher, but also frequently determines the kind of teacher one might become. This is the familiarity factor. Teachers and potential teachers were all once students and many hold deeply to the image of teachers and teaching they remember. The model they vividly remember as students is often the model they practice as teachers, despite the fact it may contradict the model taught and supported by their teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser and Buchman, 1983). Because teacher biography plays such a powerful role in the development of teachers, new teachers need to be aware of this factor and its effects on their practice.

Teacher Induction

Teaching is sometimes defined in terms of style. While some classrooms can be described as studies in perpetual motion, others can be described as tombs. Some teachers, fervently pursuing an activity centered curriculum, spend most of their day amid swirls of students monitoring and facilitating as necessary. Others, married to manuals and ditto sheets, remain rooted to their desks and the front of the room. Each teacher will "cover the curriculum" in his or her style.

Although style is personal and somewhat inherent, it is something that is developed over time. It develops with experience.

New teachers begin with seedlings of style. These seedlings need to be properly nurtured if they are to mature and grow strong and healthy. New teachers need an arena in which to discover and develop their styles. In most cases, little opportunity exists to do this.

A major factor that contributes to this is that new teachers are expected to fulfill the same responsibilities as teachers who have been teaching for five, ten, fifteen, and twenty or more years. Although the expectations about their performances may not be the same, the responsibilities remain the same. For new teachers, the fantasy of what teaching will be is suddenly and harshly replaced by the reality of daily classroom life. Whereas experienced teachers can predict or anticipate what lies ahead, new teachers have little experience to draw on. Thus begins their ride on an emotional roller coaster (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1989). Studies on beginning teachers describe this stage as one of survival (Fuller, 1969; Ryan, 1986) or transition shock (Corcoran, 1981).

Many other factors affect new teachers. These include inappropriate settings, induction systems based on evaluation rather than support, conflicting definitions of good teaching that result in a lack of uniformity among evaluation systems across states and schools, and unsuccessful and often ineffective mentorship programs (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Darling-Hammond and Goodwin, 1993; Gehrke, 1991; Zimpher and Grossman, 1992).

The problem of inappropriate settings is not new. New teachers are frequently given difficult placements in classrooms and schools that teachers with more seniority tend to avoid. The level of

difficulty of the placement is equal to if not greater than the challenge of beginning teaching itself. In addition to poor placements, these teachers are given little support or supervision. This lack of attention to newcomers is common in teaching yet unheard of in most other professions. Ignoring the needs of newcomers not only hampers their growth and development as professionals but shows disregard for the clients being served (Darling-Hammond and Goodwin, 1993).

Induction systems for new teachers are frequently based on evaluation rather than support. Many states and school districts employ systems that monitor and evaluate a teacher's performance using a designated rating or performance scale. The vantage point, questions, and individual needs of the newcomer are frequently ignored in this format.

Research on effective teaching has shown us that teaching behaviors vary according to the nature and needs of the student population, the content material, and the instructional objectives being pursued. For a successful lesson to take place, experienced teachers learn to adjust their behaviors accordingly. Because these variables are constantly changing, generalized rules for successful teaching strategies cannot be statistically established (Darling-Hammond and Sclan, 1992). Evaluation instruments therefore are inconsistent, reflecting varying philosophies of teaching, teacher style, and teacher behavior. It is therefore possible that the methods, strategies and philosophies established by new teachers in their teacher education programs conflict with the ones reflected or

represented in the evaluation instrument measuring their achievement!

Already stymied by the chaos and confusion of the classroom, new teachers now see their newly formulated beliefs and ideals challenged. What are they to think? How are they to make sense of their teaching? All these factors contribute to the large numbers of new teachers who leave the profession after a short period of service.

Mentorship Programs

The high attrition rate of new teachers created cause for professional concern. Many state legislatures implemented teacher mentorship programs to address this problem. Little uniformity exists among these programs, however, because specific design is left to the individual school districts. Although mentorship programs share similar goals and characteristics, there are no standard regulations regarding such issues as the amount of time to be spent with the new teacher, release time for the parties involved, and stipends (Zimpher and Grossman, 1992).

Lack of uniformity also exists among selection criteria for mentor teachers . Regulations do not specify a teacher's competence or level of expertise in the classroom, the number of years of teaching experience, or the preparation and qualification for mentorship. Many mentors are not offered training or special certification in this area.

Many dedicated teachers volunteer to be mentors because they believe this is important and meaningful work. However, other motives also come into play. Some teachers participate as mentors

because of stipends. Others are designated mentors because their teaching assignments or building locations parallel those of the new or returning teachers. The compatibility factor, a crucial part of the mentoring relationship, is often not a consideration in this process (Zimpher and Grossman, 1992; Gehrke, 1991).

There are currently two basic models of mentorship programs. The first is an assistance model in which the mentor's role is one of a coach, trusted guide, helping teacher, or counselor (Schien, 1978; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Borko, 1986). These models are designed to provide ongoing support to new teachers.

The second model is an assistance - assessment model. The mentor provides support and direction to the novice teacher but is also expected to evaluate that teacher's performance. In this capacity, the mentor determines career ladder decisions and may affect licensing decisions. This model, most commonly known as PAR, peer assistance and review, was first designed by the Toledo Public Schools (Zimpher and Grossman, 1992; Darling-Hammond and Sclan, 1992). Critics of this model see the dual role of the mentor as creating a conflict of interest in the mentoring relationship. Although PAR has since been duplicated by other school districts, the controversial issue it raises regarding whether or not the same person can or should perform these two roles has been left unresolved (Zimpher and Grossman, 1992; Darling-Hammond and Sclan, 1992) .

In-Service Programs

In lieu of or in addition to mentorship programs, some school districts provide inservice support programs to assist new and returning teachers. One goal of this format to is familiarize newcomers to the district. Another goal is to address areas of teaching and instruction that research has shown to be most difficult and challenging to new teachers. Such topics are usually identified and planned in advance by administrative staff.

Presentations are usually made in workshop settings where new teachers are further provided with models and strategies to improve their abilities. Again they are the recepients other people's agendas and good intentions. Their direct needs and individual questions are often left unanswered and unaddressed.

Though the development of mentorship programs for new teachers holds a great deal of promise, questions regarding their design and implementation still need to be addressed. There is still a need for innovators of these programs to identify and meet the individual needs of the teachers for whom these programs are designed. This step appears to be frequently ommited.

Since the inception and development of mentorship programs is relatively new, research is still in the process of discovering and identifying what makes them successful. Because the areas of this research are so subjective and inclusive of countless variations, it is unikely that a standard model of mentorship practice can be statistically established. This does not preclude the possibility that mentorship programs and experiences can be effective and successful.

Teacher Isolation

Another aspect of teaching that affects new teachers is that of teacher isolation. Despite a full and busy workday and a classroom filled with students, a teacher's day is lonely and isolated. Meaningful opportunities for teachers to commune with peers or other adults during the school day are rare. Teachers are not taught nor are they provided the opportunities to share their work and learn from one another (Lortie, 1975; Lieberman and Miller, 1984; Gehrke, 1991). Seasoned veterans know this; novices do not. Even though experienced teachers offer assistance to their new colleagues and suggest they ask for help any time, rarely are there designated opportunities for this to occur. Forced to struggle and find their own ways, new teachers are cut off from those who are most able to help them understand and adjust to their new conditions. Once again, the best of intentions and the hopes of novices are lost within a system that is insensitive to the direct needs of its professionals.

Methodology

This research is descriptive in nature. A case study approach has been used to interpret data that was collected from two cohorts of workshop participants. A variety of data-gathering instruments was used: questionnaires, interviews, tape-recorded proceedings. Data was collected from both cohorts. The participants in cohort one concluded the two cycle program. Of the eight participants, six teachers completed the questionnaires. One questionnaire was

distributed at the end of the first cycle and one was distributed following completion of the second cycle. Two teachers discontinued the workshop after one cycle and did not submit responses. Open-ended taped interviews (Mischler, 1986, 90) that took place early in the following school year provided an additional source of data. In addition, workshop discussions and conferences provided additional data sources and means of data triangulation.

A second set of data was derived from Cohort two who began the program the following September. This group of six novices and one returning teacher participated for only one cycle. (Three teachers did not continue because they needed to fulfill their Master's Degree certification requirement. Two other teachers were invited by their principals to attend other workshops. The remaining two simply wanted more time for themselves.) Questionnaires were distributed at the end of the first cycle. Taped workshop sessions and conferences provided additional data sources and means of data triangulation. As themes emerged from the data, the researcher turned to the literature, reflecting conjointly on the data and the readings. The themes that emerged are examined in the following section.

Making the Classroom Work: A Program of Support and Instruction for New Teachers

Program Description

Making the Classroom Work: A Program of Support and Instruction For New Teachers was a series of after school workshops

designed to address the many needs of beginning teachers. Based on the premise that the responsibility of being a new teacher can be overwhelming in many dimensions, this program was designed to offer its participants practical information for meeting the realities of daily classroom life as well as personal support in helping them discover their identity as teachers.

This program was one of many offered to teachers through the Instructional Services Division of Southern Westchester BOCES. Although teachers are invited to enroll in workshops of their own choice, building principals often assign or suggest programs to their teachers for purposes of staff development. The teachers participating in these workshops were all invited by their principals to attend. Sessions took place on Thursday.

The goals of this workshop were to provide instruction and support on matters of concern to first year teachers. Although research on teaching has identified the stages of teacher development and determined the generic concerns of novice teachers (Fuller, 1969; Veenman, 1984), the primary goal was to identify and clarify the specific nature of the needs of *this* group. The researcher discovered through professional experience and research how often the individual and personal needs and goals of new teachers are neglected. To address this issue, it was critical that the cohort group identify and establish the goals and direction of this workshop. They needed to learn to value the strength and importance of their own voices (McDonald, 1986, 88). In this way they would begin to become responsible leaders in their own professional development.

Another primary goal was to create a supportive and trusting environment for these new teachers and to develop the principles of colleagueship and collaboration (Lieberman and Miller, 1984, 1990; Alfonso and Goldsberry, 1982; Little, 1982, 1987). Bringing them together as a strong and unified group would enable them to talk candidly and freely without fear of rejection or ridicule. They would feel safe to analyze their teaching and raise questions about practice. The context of these discussions would provide rich opportunities to help the novices bridge the gap from theory to practice, explore their own teaching and learning biographies, and make more logical sense of the classroom experience. Additionally, the mentor could coordinate dialog and cooperation among the group, thus planting the seeds for a flourishing collegial relationship.

Perceptions of New Teachers in December

December marked the completion of the first cycle of the New Teachers Workshop. The new teachers came with different beliefs and preconceived notions about teaching and arrived at their conclusions from different starting points. Though each teacher's experience was separate and unique, many of their visions and experiences overlapped. These early impressions describe their formative views of teaching, teachers, and students. Their understanding of teaching and the role of the teacher is expressed from many different vantage points.

Teacher as Carer and Nurturer of Children

One's love of children is often a reason for choosing teaching as a profession. Prospective teachers often believe that caring about children will lead to teaching success. This love of children and the belief that this love plays an important role in the classroom became a sustaining factor in their ability to endure beginning teaching.

> I think what keeps me going is my concern and love for the kids. I think the kids picked upon this right away in September. (Marilyn)
>
> I truly love being with the kids and feel that I make some difference in their lives. (Karen)
>
> One of the most important qualities that supports me as a teacher is my love for children. (Jessica)

Loving children is often confused with understanding children. Although these new teachers claimed they loved children, they were not always prepared to understand their actions. Their preconceived notions about children were challenged.

> I was not really prepared for the intensity of apathy displayed by some students toward their grades/learning. I assumed that even if the student did not "like" chemistry, earth science, etc. they still would be concerned with maintaining a passing average. That has not been the case... I had no previous experience dealing with classified or non-regent students. My initial expectations may have been very unrealistic both socially and academically. (Kevin)
>
> All of these students come to me after dealing with their own problems. I often feel that I need to be a 'mother,' a 'friend,' and a wonderful listener...I need to work on understanding

where these children are coming from. Many of these children have needs beyond the classroom that must be addressed. I would like to become better equipped to deal with that. (Carol)

The children are less mature than I expected. On the other hand, the children's openness and relaxed attitude is so much fun! (Ellen)

Teacher as Manager and Controller

Like most new teachers, this group was concerned with issues of management, organization, and control. They believed that if students were well directed and told what to do, learning would take place. These teachers expressed a need for structure not only in terms of their students but also in terms of themselves.

I need to establish and maintain a strong locus of control. I feel this will benefit the students in a variety of ways. Keeping a calmer atmosphere is necessary. (Jessica)

My organization skills keep me getting through the day and allow the class to be structured and run fairly smoothly. (Laura)

I was so scared to begin teaching. I had many nightmares of not having control...I would like to be very well prepared and organized. I must continue to develop a style that works well for me in the class. (Lisa)

Teaching is Time-Consuming and Hard Work

Romantics and skeptics believe that teaching is a simple 9-3 job with great vacations. Even these new teachers who had successfully completed teacher education programs and fulfilled rigorous student teaching requirements were still surprised and overwhelmed by the time and effort required to prepare for and get through a day in the classroom.

> There's only so much time in a day that I can reasonably hope to accomplish certain work...Carol and I both spoke about how the work seemed never ending because we both were trying to develop our own materials. No time for a social life, exercise, casual reading, etc. I jokingly said that I'm not paid enough for this amount of work! (Kevin)
>
> I knew the classroom experience would be a lot of work, but not this much! I was surprised! (Karen)
>
> I expected things to be a lot easier! Ha! After last year's program I thought I could handle anything! (Marilyn)

Teachers and Sense of Self

The experience of being a new teacher is often confusing, stressful, frustrating, and disheartening. Like many new teachers, they experienced a loss of confidence in the few abilities they thought they possessed as novice practicioners. In addition, they experienced a loss of confidence in themselves as individuals. Some were afraid. They believed they were alone in their struggle and that they were failures. Working together as a group helped them address this issue and provided them with renewed strength and a return of self-confidence.

> I was filled with self-doubt and feeling so alone. Knowing that other teachers -who are competent people- felt the same way made me feel so much better. That gave me the strength to face the next day with a little more confidence. (Lisa)
>
> It helped me to realize that I wasn't the only one feeling frustrated and at times ineffective. Knowing that others were having difficulties was extremely helpful. (Carol)

> I have more confidence and believe that what I am doing is worthwhile. For a period of time, I believed that I was terribly lagging behind the other two classes, and I became overwhelmed with stress. I have since learned that I need to take pride in what I do and what my students do, rather than constantly compare myself to other experienced teachers. (Jessica)

> I have greater confidence in myself than I had in September. I have to tackle difficult decisions all on my own. I've learned to simply ask and not to be afraid to say, 'I don't know that yet! It's wonderful having that support! (Laura)

Teachers as Collaborators

The benefits of collegial and collaborative relationships in the school community have been documented. As the mentor modeled and nurtured the principles of colleagueship throughout the workshops, the new teachers became more able to identify problems, explore and develop effective classroom strategies to address those problems, and adopt new visions and vantage points from which to view their work. They discovered that listening and sharing with each other enabled them to independently become more resourceful, knowledgeable, and effective teachers as well as supportive peers. The principles of colleagueship heightened the group's ability to deliberate, analyze, and problem solve and inevitably supported the process of reflective teaching. Together these new teachers extended their knowledge base of teaching and developed an awareness and sensitivity to each others needs as professionals and individuals.

> The honesty of the group is so helpful. Because of that honesty there has been great understanding and advice...I feel the support I need at each meeting and walk away with more

information and a clearer understanding of my classroom. (Laura)

I had the opportunity to share ideas and feelings with a group of colleagues other than those I work with. The atmosphere was very low pressure, and we all felt comfortable talking about anything and everything. This is invaluable, I feel, as it is sometimes difficult to share, complain, and get help from those you work with directly. (Jessica)

The workshop was a safe haven with other people in similar situations. These people were willing to listen and give workable solutions to what seemed to be insurmountable problems. The workshop was objective but sympathetic to a new teacher's concerns...The workshop also fostered a genuine concern for each other. I found myself worrying about how everyone else was doing week to week. (Karen)

The group provided me with specific solutions to very specific problems that I was trying to deal with in my classroom. Also by trying to help others with their problems, I generated many more ideas about many more topics/situations than I ever could have come up with by sitting alone. All the participants seemed genuinely concerned with trying to solve the problems that arose during our meetings and the mentor allowed the group the freedom to explore those issues that were of concern to us. (Kevin)

I learned the importance of discussions and listening with colleagues. I would not have felt comfortable having them with my new faculty. It was O.K. to admit not knowing something or asking for help. The mentor really seemed to listen and value what you had to say, as opposed to a professional who only desires to impart his or her ideals, values, and beliefs on you. This is very important in your first year. (Terry)

Teachers as Learners

Beginning teachers are often overwhelmed by their numerous responsibilities. Learning to maintain an even keel is often the most

they hope to achieve. These novices realized how much they still needed to learn and develop as teachers. They each set specific goals for their professional development according to their individual interests and personal needs.

> I still need to learn to relax and build up my confidence. I have to feel more confident and assertive in decision making. I'm always wavering and hesitant. (Marilyn)

> I need to learn how to develop a more structured reading program. I want to spend more time listening to individual children read and learn how to record that... I want to learn how to keep good portfolios for the children. (Laura)

> I want to continue to create good communication with teachers, the principal, and the parents. I definitely will start a newsletter in January, explaining what we are studying...I want to enjoy teaching, especially by not teaching too much at once. A little done well is the best way. (Ellen)

> I'd like to continue to improve/explore the methods by which I'm teaching. I want to "throw" as much of the responsibility for learning on my students as possible. I want to develop ways to improve social interaction in my non-regents science class and I think with the help of this workshop I'm on my way. (Kevin)

By December, the new teachers identified specific areas of personal interest and instruction they needed or desired to develop. They established short term and long term goals to pursue, each according to his or her individual needs in the classroom.

Perceptions of New Teachers in May

The second and final cycle of the New Teachers Workshop concluded in May. The group had been working together for eight

months. During that time, they expanded and reinterpreted their earlier perceptions of teachers, teaching, and students. Their formative perceptions were redefined within the context of their growing experiences. They discovered the many integral and reciprocal relationships that exist within the complex world of teaching.

Teacher as Carer and Nurturer of Children

Though their love of children remained a sustaining factor in their belief systems, the new teachers discovered that love was not solely responsible for classroom success. They began to uncover the motivations behind the children's thoughts and actions. They began to identify and respect the children's individual qualities. Their need to understand children paralleled their need to care for them.

> I was surprised by how much the children really know and understand. I found myself speaking to them as little people, not always children. I didn't give them enough credit at first for their sense of themselves and their creativity. (Laura)

> The thing that surprised me most about teaching is how perceptive kids can be! (Jessica)

> I've learned to relax and enjoy the children. I see now that Fall's 'difficult' child has wonderful qualities that I really appreciate now. (Lisa)

By the close of the workshop's second cycle, the new teachers realized that understanding children and recognizing their individual needs and qualities must guide effective teaching. Understanding the principles of child development was paramount to classroom success.

Teacher as Manager and Controller

By the end of the workshop, the new teachers believed even more strongly in the need for good management and organization. They learned, however, that management was not synonymous with control. They discovered that some forms of control counteract student success and creativity and that children flourish by teaching and learning from each other.

> One of the biggest changes which I see in myself since September is the ability to turn control over to my class and away from myself. I've learned that children learning from children is valuable and the 'tight ship' model does not always work. (Jessica)
>
> I've learned to relax and be myself. I'm able to let go in control and take back leadership when necessary. It's never too late to develop new limits if necessary. (Ellen)
>
> I've learned to have a plan of action that makes sense! I've learned to listen to the kids for 'status.' (Marilyn)

Beginning teachers reaffirmed their belief that effective management and organization supported successful classroom experiences, but they modified their belief about control. They learned that allowing students to be responsible and active participants in their roles as learners created a dynamic and positive force in the classroom. Teachers need not be dictators; they can be effective facilitators.

Teaching is Time-Consuming and Hard Work

The new teachers continued to underestimate the consuming nature of teaching. Their work was never done! What they gradually began to discover was that teaching was not limited to the

confines of their students and classrooms. Their responsibilities overlapped into many other areas. Being a teacher meant being an integral part of a school community.

> I've re-learned and re-affirmed the fact that teaching takes a lot of organization, preparation, and record keeping. In the public school you deal with all kinds of adult personalities, some who are not always supportive...Schools are highly political. (Ellen)

> I'm still surprised by the amount of time and work one must put into teaching. Besides planning and developing ideas the extra curricular activities and being part of the faculty really take a great deal of time. (Karen)

> There's so much responsibility and accountability in teaching. Added responsibilities blew me away...I wish I knew not to go to the principal for support. (Marilyn)

The new teachers learned that the playing field of teaching stretched far beyond the classroom walls. The role of teacher was one position with varied responsibilities on a team of many players. During the course of a school day, the teachers found they interacted not only with their students, but also with other teachers, school staff, administrators, and parents. They learned that schools are social and political organizations and that they are not always supportive. Although teaching was indeed time-consuming and hard work, they learned that teaching was only a small part of a complex series of relationships and responsibilities.

Teachers and Sense of Self

May found the new teachers more self-confident and secure in their roles as teachers. The accumulation of small victories and successes added up to a dramatic rise in their self-esteem. Together

and individually they began to uncover their strengths, stand up for their beliefs, and have faith in their instincts as teachers.

> I see such a change in my self-confidence in teaching! I came in with little confidence and was constantly thinking, 'Can I really do it on my own?' Now I feel very confident in my ability as a teacher and also in my instincts. I've seen the results of my teaching through what the children have learned and through the eyes of other professionals around me. (Laura)

> At first I felt everyone was a better teacher than I. Would I ever measure up? As time went by and I saw that my kids were learning and loving school I felt that I was as good as the next teacher. There are even people asking for my advice and about my ideas now! (Karen)

> I have such renewed and increased confidence! There's been inner growth, faith, a great husband, this class, and also seeing the true growth in my kids that I know I had a hand in! (Marilyn)

> The mentor worked from our needs and gave us a lot of good specific materials. It was supportive for me in developing my self-confidence. (Ellen)

The confidence and pride expressed by these new teachers developed within the context and experience of the classroom. The sources of validation came from the children, other teachers and colleagues, and the various support systems upon which they learned to depend. Gradually they began to believe in themselves and with time and proof realized that they were responsible for their own success! Success breeds a strong sense of self. This strong sense of self enabled these new teachers to continue to grow, develop and explore their capacities as teachers.

Teachers as Collaborators

In December, the new teachers discovered the benefits of working together. They learned that as a group they could begin to address and in some cases solve their own problems. By the end of the second cycle, the new teachers depended on one another and relied upon each other unquestionably for both emotional and professional support.

> I appreciated the information we shared (there was quality and quantity), but also the incredible support from you and the others. I learned that my problems were normal and that together we could always find at least one solution. (Laura)

> I was able to get help, advice, and support when I needed it. I would tell a new teacher not to be afraid to ask for advice and seek out others in the faculty who have the same ideas and philosophy on teaching. (Karen)

> I attribute my gain in confidence to three things: (1) time, (2) support from other teachers, and (3) support from the workshop. This was really a place to talk and work things out. Knowing that the course was next Thursday always made me feel better because I knew I could discuss concerns at that time. (Lisa)

By May, the new teachers had become dependent upon one another. They knew that their shared efforts enabled them to continue to improve their instruction and understanding of teaching. Some transferred the idea of sharing back to their own schools and developed collaborative relationships with other faculty and peers.

Teachers as Learners

As the complexity of teaching became clearer, the new teachers realized how much more there was to learn! They needed to

continue to learn about themselves as teachers and to develop their skills as professionals.

> I set my sights too high in the beginning, and tried to do everything right away. It didn't work. I learned to keep my eyes wide open for new ideas, but I had to pick and choose what would work for me. (Laura)

> I see that support is necessary for all teachers. It is wonderful to see the teachers with 15-20 years experience still taking courses. They are still looking for new ideas! (Lisa)

> It's been great to hear so many new ideas and experience such dedication. It has led me to attend other workshops. I even have the nerve to apply to demonstrate early childhood ESL activities at a TESOL (English as a second language) Conference with my fellow teacher. Hope we get accepted! (Ellen)

The new teachers expanded their vision of teaching to a spectrum beyond their own classrooms. There were different layers of learning they needed to pursue, and they began to develop a schema for developing goals within the context of these layers. They needed to discover their identity and personal style. They recognized that their own nucleus of beginning needs was part of a continuum of needs and concerns they will always have as teachers. Most importantly, having learned the importance of support in teaching, they developed the professional responsibility to want to support other teachers.

Eight Months Later

Although the new teachers workshop ended in May, communication among the first cohort group and their mentor continued on an irregular basis. Group members needed and wanted

to touch base with one another from time to time. For purposes of this research, the mentor organized a reunion of the first cohort group to have them reflect upon the workshop in the context of their year and a half of teaching experience.

Most apparent was their continued development of sense of self. Every spoken word resounded with confidence and pride. Their commitment to teaching was stronger than ever, as was the mutual trust and respect they felt for one another. Their abilities to collaborate and reflect had become instinctive, for as they began to share each other's experiences, they automatically resumed the roles of listener, supporter, and interpreter. Their focus of attention centered on the nature of the workshop and the process of teaching and learning.

Teachers and Sense of Self

The teachers concurred that the workshop's off campus location enabled them to talk freely and honestly. They could ask the questions they were afraid to ask in their schools and come away with answers and strategies to improve their teaching. The group's unconditional acceptance provided strong emotional support which allowed the novices to be themselves.

> There was no risk here. This was away from school. What we'd speak about stayed in the room. There was no place for it to go. (Jessica)

> A lot of our success had to do with emotional support. We were there for one another. We bonded rather quickly and trusted one another. We knew we had a place to come to where we didn't have to answer to our principal, our mentor, the community. We could learn to be ourselves. (Karen)

> We always came in talking about the things we did wrong! We identified our weaknesses, whereas the group made us see each other's strengths. We pulled our strengths out of each other! (Laura)

> It was good to be in a different setting with different people. Anonymity promotes honesty. No one here's going to hurt you. Back at school, word gets out. (Marilyn)

Teachers as Collaborators

The collaborative skills of this group enabled them to identify, explore, and solve problems related to their practice. Because they viewed these skills as powerful learning tools, they looked for other teachers to work with in their schools. Four of the six teachers found partners they trusted. Though they claimed it was not like "the group" they acknowledged it was a beginning. Some teachers learned that collaboration in schools is not easy to establish or maintain, yet despite these findings still found themselves trying to help others. They had become fully entangled in the complexities of school life.

> We knew we could talk about anything, but as much as we liked each other, we were objective. If we thought there was something you could do differently we weren't afraid to say so...We knew we could get realistic help, realistic ways of trying to solve a problem. (Karen)

> I used to panic last year. There was too much I didn't know. I couldn't sleep. I'd just wait for Thursday ... I still get nervous, but there are people I trust now. I ask their opinions. I also think of process. They have a group for first year teachers that second year teachers can opt to attend. I'm involved with that. (Lisa)

> I have someone I share with, but I really have to want to let my hair down. This relationship had a difficult beginning, but you can work things out with others. It's difficult...I also work with a woman who's been here for eighteen years. She's been so helpful. When I beat myself up because I'm convinced I didn't teach the kids anything, she reminds me of all the things I did. (Ellen)

> Some of us began to have an ongoing growth group so we could work on whole language. We would meet once a week. We notified all the other teachers in the building to tell them about the meetings. One very viscious teacher undermined our meetings by telling other teachers things that weren't true. There were lots of problems in the building at that time. It was very disheartening... There are three new teachers in our school this year. They are having a hard time. I find myself helping them out. (Karen)

Teachers as Learners

The teachers continued to expand their visions of teaching by linking theory to practice. They described the need to help their students develop self esteem and discussed designing classroom activities that were age appropriate and fun. They talked about working *with* the children. They continued to talk reflectively about their teaching and looked backward to look forward. They perceived teaching as constantly changing.

> I find I'm still questioning myself. I don't look at things in a derogatory sense anymore. If I'm not thrilled with it I don't beat myself up anymore. I think about what changes need to to be made to make it work. I stop. I leave it and go on to something else and regroup. I keep thinking about how to do it differently, how to bring the kids back in. (Karen)

I keep remembering I can start all over. There's always tomorrow. It's okay that it's January 22. I can figure out another way. I know I can get the kids together at class meeting and talk about it and try to explain. (Laura)

I think we do a lot of creative self-criticism. I also don't beat myself up too much anymore. I keep thinking about the things I want to do. There are so many things we did and talked about that I haven't gotten to. I'm working towards that. I want to stretch them...and me. (Ellen)

Analysis

First Year Teachers and Sense of Self

Consistent throughout the data is evidence that these first year teachers were imbued with feelings of self-doubt, insecurity, and aloneness. Their lack of self-confidence contributed to tentative teaching and decision making. Their aloneness left many questions unanswered. The most important factor that contributed to their growth as teachers was their development of a strong sense of self. The teachers learned to believe in themselves as individuals and in their abilities as teachers. These beliefs evolved through experience in their classrooms, discussion with peers and workshop members, and careful and deliberate individual and group reflection.

The new teachers slowly learned to identify their needs and to develop goals and strategies to meet those needs. Jessica (p. 16) and Karen (p. 21) learned to stop comparing themselves to others and to take pride in their accomplishments. Laura (p.16) realized it was acceptable to acknowledge there were things she had not yet

learned. Marilyn (p. 19) and Laura (p.23) both realized teaching had to make sense to them as individuals. They were beginning to discover their own sense of personal reality (Greene, 1978). The critical need for teachers to develop a strong sense of self is supported in the literature on teacher development.

We have learned through research that teachers pass through progressive stages of development as they journey through their careers (Fuller, 1969; Berliner, 1988; Ryan, 1986). As with most hierarchical structures, the goal is to reach the furthest, most advanced level of that structure as quickly as possible. Recent research contradicts this belief and suggests that more time be spent along the journey through the stages (Kagan, 1992; Gehrke, 1991).

Newcomers to any profession are confused and unsure of their role. They have many questions that need to be examined and explored in the context of their new environment. New teachers have limited experiences upon which to reflect (Berliner, 1988), lack understandings of the contexts in which they work, and need to develop an understanding of themselves as teachers (Bullough, Knowles and Crow, 1989). Learning to teach takes time and often requires assistance to help figure out the subtle meanings and relationships that define its practice. In order to understand the true essence of teaching, one should not rush quickly through the stages (Gehrke, 1991).

Although Fuller (1969) perceived a novice's focus on sense of self as weakness, research today suggests it is not weakness at all but a necessary part of learning to become a teacher. Discovering and understanding "Who am I?" as a teacher will have a

profound effect on the kind of teacher one will become (Bullough, Knowles & Crow,1989; Gehrke, 1991; Kagan, 1992). In order to support the development of sense of self, it is necessary to prolong this stage of Fuller's model (Kagan, 1992).

Research continues to reinterpret Fuller's vision and suggests that the novices' sense of self and their sense of their students evolves simultaneously (Kagan, 1992). The data appears to confirm this concept. As the new teachers reflected upon their practice, gained experience, and grew stronger, they concurrently modified their images of their students and began to perceive them from many different vantage points. Their developing image of self evolved alongside their developing images of their students in almost a parallel construction.

As the novices worked to develop their understanding of teaching, they began to establish their sense of self as teachers. Together with their mentor, they discussed, explored, and revisited topics of interest and concern, reflecting carefully upon the added dimensions and nuances they discovered. The data describes their evolving and reconstructed vision of teaching, a vision emanating a stronger sense of self combined with a deeper understanding of practice.

Collaboration and the Evolving Perception of Good Teaching

The data documents that these teachers continued to transform their visions of teaching even after the workshop had ended. This transformation stemmed from many sources. Most important among these was the spirit of collegiality and collaboration engendered by the group. These sentiments echoed throughout the data and

surfaced in every interview, every questionnaire response, and every discussion. They were reaffirmed emphatically when the first cohort group reunited the following January to reflect upon the workshop experience (pp. 24 - 27).

The new teachers and their mentor generated a bond of honesty, trust, and mutual respect which nurtured each other's emotional and professional needs. As the new teachers listened to one another, they heard their own stories resounding in the voices of their peers. Their initial feelings of aloneness and fear were replaced with feelings of togetherness and support. The group became a "safe haven" where teachers learned to care and worry about one another (Karen, p. 17; Laura, p. 16; Jessica, p. 16; Lisa, p.22).

Caring, an important part of teaching (Noddings, 1988), became a powerful catalyst for these novices. Although they comforted each other in a caring way, they soon realized caring was not enough. They began to help one another solve their problems. The ability to care about one another inspired the need and the determination to help one another. The caring and emotional support of the teachers for one another provided the foundation for their cognitive development. Once the personal levels of trust and understanding were established by the group, the professional domains could safely be explored.

As the novices analyzed their experiences, their mentor worked hard to forge links between theory and practice. Together they drew conclusions which connected the content of the textbooks to the context of their classrooms. They finally understood that together they could be "responsible for improving their instruction

and for assisting their colleagues in their own self-improvement" (Alfonso and Goldsberry, 1982, p. 91). The data suggests that the group's adoption of and belief in the principles of collegiality and collaboration provided the structure and strength for their growth and development as teachers.

Although the bureaucratic nature and isolation factor of schools appear to inhibit the development of collegiality among faculty (Little, 1987), four of the six novices revealed in the January interview that they had developed successful collegial relationships in their school (pp. 26-27). They needed to share their teaching because the sharing perpetuated growth. The need for new teachers to break the isolation pattern, talk about their teaching, and share their experiences is supported in the literature (Bullough, 1989; Lieberman, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1990, 1992; Little, 1987; Lortie, 1975).

Professional Growth and Development of New Teachers

The new teachers modified and expanded their visions of teaching, teachers and children throughout their first year of teaching. Many factors contributed to this change. The actual experience of the classroom and the complex realities which accompanied that experience created new vantage points from which to view teaching. Although the novices spent countless hours preparing and practicing to become teachers, they were still surprised by the experience. They remained outsiders to the world of teaching until they became teachers themselves (Freidus, 1992).

The emphasis placed on reflective teaching (Schon, 1983, 87) generated the development of a more sophisticated schema of teaching. This deepening understanding of teaching created a growth in metacognition, enabling these newcomers to expand their knowledge bases and generate workable and realistic solutions to their problems. The reflective process helped the teachers develop a more accurate and realistic picture of their students and taught them to focus more on their individual needs and learning styles. Most significantly, reflection encouraged the teachers to look deeply within themselves, encouraging them to question and explore their inner most feelings, motivations, and actions. The combination of these qualities - increased metacognition, the acquisition of knowledge about pupils, a shift in attention to the needs of students, and a growth in problem solving abilities highlight Kagan's (1992) critieria which define growth and development among beginning teachers. The data implies that by the end of their first year of teaching, the new teachers exhibited many of these qualities.

Finally, the professional growth and development of the new teachers can be attributed to the program design. In order to meet the unique and specific needs of these new teachers, the goals of the program were directly established by the teachers themselves. They were not predetermined by others. The mentor supported these goals and the teachers respected and appreciated the mentor's effort to fulfill them (Karen, p. 16; Kevin, p. 17; Ellen, p.22).

In examining and interpreting the data, it is difficult to determine whether these outcomes were produced by the nature of the program design or the nature of the participating novice

teachers. It appears to be a combination of both. The new teachers brought with them to this workshop a tremendous desire to succeed and a strong determination to work towards that end. They were terrified of failing, yet they were more terrified of asking for help within the framework of their own schools. They wanted and needed direction as much as they wanted and needed to be accepted as professionals. The mentor was equally determined to help these novices succeed. A mutual level of readiness helped create the nurturing and productive workshop environment. The data suggests that the professional growth and development of these beginning teachers should be attributed to a combination of factors which include their development of a strong sense of self, their spirit of colleagueship and the knowledge it generated, and a program designed with their needs in mind.

Implications for Mentorship Programs and Teacher Education Programs

The data collected in this study present implications for the development of mentorship programs as well as for programs of teacher education. In order to more fully prepare teachers for this difficult first year it is important that specific concepts and skills be introduced, modeled, and practiced during the formative years of teacher education.

1. Beginning teachers share many common problems which if left untended will impair their professional growth and development.

Afraid of being labeled incompetent, they struggle alone. Unwilling to ask questions, they continue to teach "blindly, " asking for and receiving no support. If new teachers are to be successful, they must be able to ask questions. They need a structured system of guidance and support to ease the passage through this difficult period. The data suggests that new teachers working together provide the strength and support needed to sustain their goals and desires to remain teachers during that first critical year. The support and guidance of a trained mentor coordinates the interaction of the group and provides the opportunity to link theory to practice in a meaningful way. Together, the novices and their mentor discuss, inquire, and reflect upon their experiences, modifying and expanding their schema of teaching.

2. Research on teaching carefully documents the development of new teachers and clearly identifies their initial concerns and needs. However, each new teacher enters teaching at a different stage of personal development and each develops an individual list of specific and genuine concerns. In order to better facilitate the novice's professional growth and understanding of teaching, support or mentorship programs need to develop differentiated curriculum which directly address these more personal and specific needs.

3. Many new teachers are unwilling to share their problems with their building administrators or colleagues. For new teachers to maximize their potential, it is suggested that support programs for new teachers take place off school grounds. The off site location provides a risk free environment (p. 25) and the "anonymity" (p. 25) in which to freely express concerns. Additionally, because the

mentor had no direct ties to the school district, advice was perceived as objective and nonjudgmental. This further suggests that the process of mentorship be totally separate from the process of teacher evaluation and assessment.

4. The complex world of teaching is not quickly or easily understood. Learning to teach takes time. New teachers need to be given the time to learn about themselves as teachers and to explore and discover the nuances of teaching. The pressure of outside concerns prohibited the second cohort group from completing the two cycle workshop. Half of the group was detoured by their principals into different workshops in order to learn more current teaching strategies. Others left to pursue their Masters degrees for purposes of certification. Although it is important for all teachers to develop new skills, beginning teachers must first learn to feel comfortable in their roles as teachers and begin to discover their own strengths and competencies. Principals and administrators who govern licensing and certification procedures should become more sensitive to this developmental process.

5. Collaborating with others is not a skill that comes naturally to most people. It is a skill that must be learned. Though the benefits and rewards of "teamwork" are clearly visible in today's society, it is not a practice that comes easily to teaching. The data implies that the collaborative approach of the workshop played a significant role in the professional development of the new teachers. Programs of teacher education can address this particular issue of practice. Coursework and supervision can be presented in a more collegial, collaborative, and interactive manner. Professors and

instructors can model this process in their own classrooms, demonstrating the richness and scope of its effects. New teachers will become familiar with this strategy and hopefully make it standard practice in their teaching repertoire.

6. New teachers need to talk about their teaching, but more importantly they must learn how to carefully analyze their practice. Many novices are unable to relate the perceptions of their daily classroom experiences to the issues of theory and practice. Becoming more reflective practitioners nurtured their understanding of the complex realities and interrelationships of teaching. Programs of teacher education need to adopt and model the principles of reflective teaching (Schon, 1983, 87), so that prospective teachers will value its practice.

7. Many teachers choose teaching as a career because they love children. These teachers were no exception. They believed that love guaranteed classroom success. Experience in the classroom combined with guided, reflective practice reminded them that classroom success was guided by understanding and identifying children's individual and developmental needs . Although most teacher education programs require coursework in child and adolescent development, the principles of this coursework must be more directly related to issues of classroom practice.

Conclusion

New teachers begin their careers believing they can make a difference in the world and in the lives of children, but the problems and conflicts they encounter as beginning teachers often undermine and shatter those dreams. In order to succeed as teachers, novices need a structured system of support and guidance to help them identify their roles as teachers and explore the complex nature and process of teaching. The support should be separate and apart from the evaluation and assessment process. The data suggests that guidance from a trained mentor and support from other novices like themselves can turn the overwhelming and lonely experience of beginning teaching into a journey of self- discovery, personal growth, and professional development.

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